

From . . .

Vienna Voices

A Traveler Listens to the City of Dreams

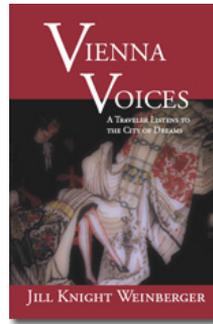
Jill Knight Weinberger

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264 pages, with illustrations, notes, and bibliography

Writing Travel Series

Edited by Jeanne Moskal



Preface

I am tempted to begin by suggesting what *Vienna Voices: A Traveler Listens to the City of Dreams* is not. It is not a book about the Holocaust, or a history of the Jews of Vienna. It is not a family history, in the conventional sense, nor is it a travel guidebook. And yet, it contains elements of all these.

My aim in writing *Vienna Voices* was to present the city through my particular set of lenses, which has, I readily admit, been tinted by long acquaintance and by my slow absorption of fact, images, and experiences over the past twenty years. I have traveled to Vienna often during that time, both alone and with my husband, G. J., whose parents were born there and then forced to leave when Hitler came to power in 1938. The living memories of these loved ones are never far from consciousness whenever I travel to Vienna and whenever I look back on my time there.

I have toured the palaces and cathedrals of this handsome city, wandered its medieval streets and through its neighborhoods, dallied in its coffeehouses and pastry shops, followed its footpaths through legendary woods. But I have learned as much about this place through listening, through filtering the city's clamor, the Viennese speech, its whispers, songs, poetry, and theatre into some level of understanding. Perhaps this book, then, is best described as kaleidoscopic, in that it brings together fragments of Vienna, bits and pieces that add up to a kind of portrait of a place, one that suggests not a single, unified image, but rather one that is richly complex, layered, ambiguous. The Vienna of popular imagination, the elegant city of waltzes and choir boys and dancing white horses, does

indeed exist, but no one really lives there except the most willfully sentimental of foreign visitors, and surely even they cannot sustain the illusion for more than a few days. A far more interesting Vienna, darker and less nostalgic, is the one with which I have become acquainted. It is a place of which I have grown fond, in spite of myself, in spite of what I think I know about its character. And that is the Vienna, so often called the city of dreams, I have attempted to render in this book.

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